



Birbal the Witty



THE TEN GREATEST FOOLS

AS THE EMPEROR, I MEET ONLY WISE AND LEARNED MEN, BIRBAL, NEVER A FOOL. SHOW ME THE TEN GREATEST FOOLS IN THE CITY.

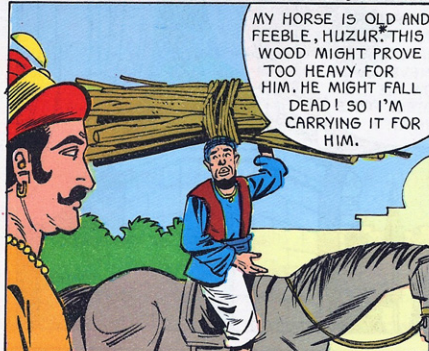
AKBAR OFTEN ASKED BIRBAL TO DO THE STRANGEST OF THINGS, BUT THIS ONE BEAT THEM ALL.

I'LL GIVE YOU A MONTH TO FIND THEM.

IT SHOULD BE NO PROBLEM, JAHANPANA. I MAY NOT NEED ALL THAT TIME.

AS BIRBAL WENT ABOUT THE CITY LOOKING FOR FOOLS, HE CAME UPON A STRANGE SIGHT.

WHY DO YOU CARRY THAT BUNDLE ON YOUR HEAD INSTEAD OF PLACING IT BEHIND YOU, ON THE SADDLE?



WHY, THAT MAN SEEMS
TO HAVE HAD A STROKE!
WAIT HERE WHILE I HELP
HIM SIT UP.



NO! DON'T!
PLEASE DON'T
TOUCH MY
HANDS!



I'M SORRY!
DO THEY
HURT?



NO! NO! NOT AT ALL!
MY WIFE HAS ASKED
ME TO BUY A POT
AS BIG AS THIS.





BIRBAL HELPED HIM UP, WITHOUT TOUCHING HIS ARMS.




NOW DROP YOUR ARMS. IF YOU COME WITH ME, I'LL BUY YOU A BEAUTIFUL SET OF POTS; FROM THE SMALLEST TO THE LARGEST SIZE!







AND YOUR WIFE
WILL BE SO
PLEASED THAT
SHE'LL NEVER
AGAIN SCOLD
YOU !



AS BIRBAL TURNED
TO MOUNT HIS HORSE—



WHAT'S THE
MATTER
WITH YOU ?
CAN'T YOU
SEE...

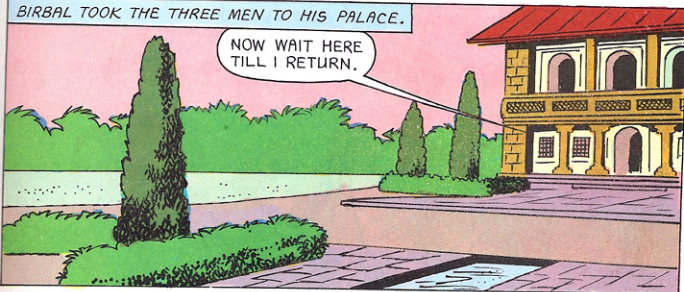


A THOUSAND PARDONS,
HUZUR. I HAD JUST
CALLED THE EVENING
PRAYER FROM THAT
MOSQUE ...





BIRBAL TOOK THE THREE MEN TO HIS PALACE.



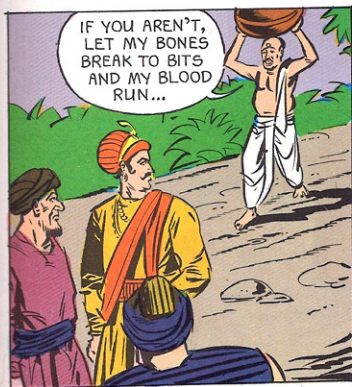
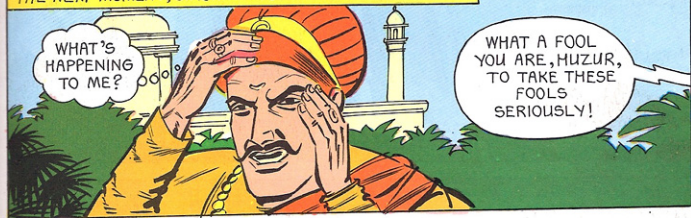
BIRBAL DID NOT HAVE TO GO FAR TO FIND MORE FOOLS.







THE NEXT MOMENT, BIRBAL RECOVERED HIS COMPOSURE.

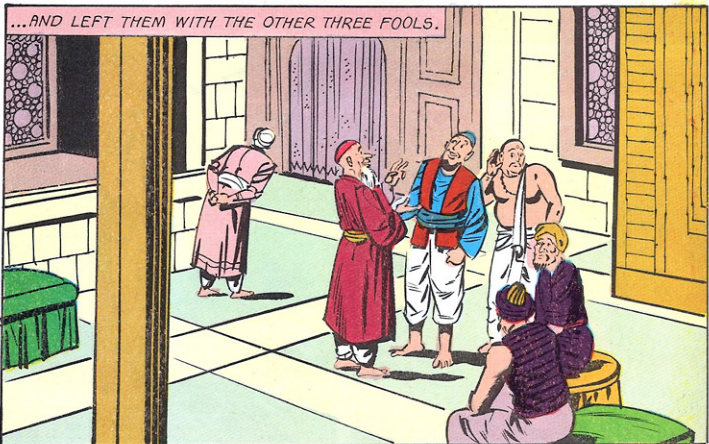




WITHOUT A WORD, BIRBAL
MARCHED THE THREE MEN
OFF TO HIS PALACE...



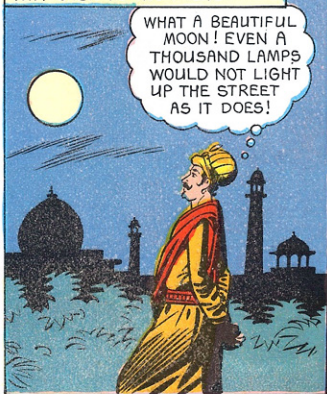
...AND LEFT THEM WITH THE OTHER THREE FOOLS.



IT WAS ALMOST DARK. THE DAY'S EXPERIENCES HAD PROVED TOO MUCH, EVEN FOR BIRBAL.



A FEW HOURS LATER, AS A REFRESHED BIRBAL WAS ON HIS WAY BACK TO HIS PALACE —





DID YOU
DROP IT
HERE?

NO HUZUR, OVER THERE, UNDER
THAT TREE. BUT IT'S BRIGHTER
HERE, SO I'M LOOKING
FOR IT HERE.



COME WITH
ME, AND
I'LL BUY
YOU A NEW
RING.

OH! HOW KIND
YOU ARE,
HUZUR!

AS BIRBAL, LOST IN THE
BEAUTY OF THE MOONLIT
NIGHT, WALKED ON—



HUZUR! HUZUR!
LOOK! THERE IS
ANOTHER MAN
WHO ALSO SEEMS
TO BE SEARCHING
FOR SOMETHING.

WH...WHAT?



THEY WALKED UP TO THE MAN.



I HID MY RING FOR SAFE-KEEPING, IN A HOLE IN THIS SAND-PILE, AND NOW I CAN'T FIND IT.

YOU MUST HAVE MARKED THE SPOT, I SUPPOSE.

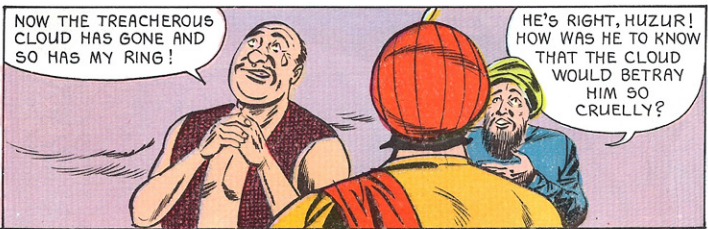


BUT NATURALLY,
HUZUR! I AM NOT
SUCH A FOOL.
THERE WAS A CLOUD
RIGHT ABOVE THE
SPOT WHERE
I HID THE
RING.



NOW THE TREACHEROUS
CLOUD HAS GONE AND
SO HAS MY RING!

HE'S RIGHT, HUZUR!
HOW WAS HE TO KNOW
THAT THE CLOUD
WOULD BETRAY
HIM SO
CRUELLY?



NEVER MIND THE
CLOUD. COME
WITH ME. WE
WILL REPLACE
YOUR RING.

YOU DON'T
MEAN IT,
HUZUR!



HE DOES! HE
IS THE KINDEST
MAN I'VE EVER
MET.

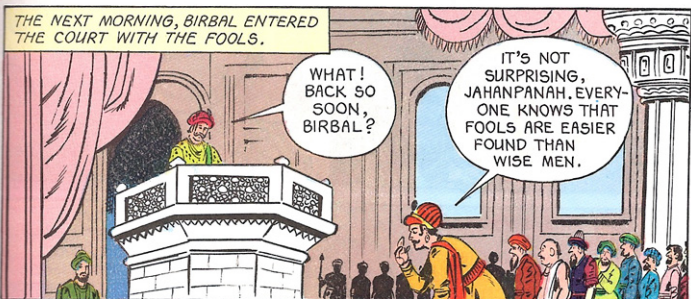


BACK AT HIS PALACE —



THERE! I HAVE
EIGHT OF THEM!
FOR THE NINTH
AND THE TENTH...
WELL!

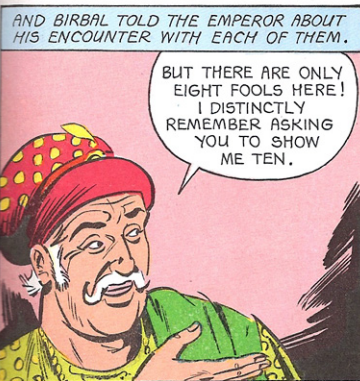
THE NEXT MORNING, BIRBAL ENTERED
THE COURT WITH THE FOOLS.



WHAT!
BACK SO
SOON,
BIRBAL?

IT'S NOT
SURPRISING,
JAHANPANA. EVERY-
ONE KNOWS THAT
FOOLS ARE EASIER
FOUND THAN
WISE MEN.

AND BIRBAL TOLD THE EMPEROR ABOUT
HIS ENCOUNTER WITH EACH OF THEM.



BUT THERE ARE ONLY
EIGHT FOOLS HERE!
I DISTINCTLY
REMEMBER ASKING
YOU TO SHOW
ME TEN.



I BEG TO
CORRECT YOU,
JAHANPANA.
THERE ARE TEN.



THE WHOLE COURT BURST OUT LAUGHING; BUT THE LOUDEST LAUGH WAS THAT OF THE EMPEROR, WHO WAS RENOWNED FOR HIS FINE SENSE OF HUMOUR.



THE CROWS OF AGRA

ONE DAY, AKBAR'S COURTIER'S CAME TO HIM WITH A COMPLAINT.

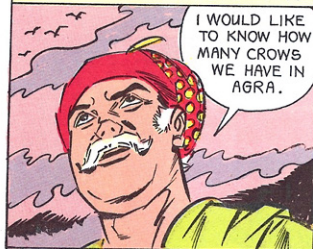
JAHANPANAH,
WHY DO YOU
ALWAYS TURN TO
BIRBAL WHEN
YOU HAVE A
PROBLEM?

BECAUSE HE
HAS AN ANSWER
FOR EVERYTHING—
A SOLUTION FOR
EVERY PROBLEM.

SO DO WE. BUT
YOU NEVER GIVE
US A CHANCE.

AH! HERE
COMES BIRBAL.
ALL RIGHT, TODAY
I WILL GIVE
ALL OF YOU A
CHANCE.

AS SOON AS BIRBAL JOINED THEM, AKBAR LOOKED UP INTO THE SKY.



I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW HOW MANY CROWS WE HAVE IN AGRA.

THE COURTIER'S LOOKED AT ONE ANOTHER IN DISMAY.



HOW ARE WE TO KNOW ?

IT WOULD TAKE US YEARS TO FIND OUT.



IT WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO COUNT THEM, JAHANPANAH! THEY DON'T STAY IN ONE PLACE.

NOBODY CAN ANSWER THAT QUESTION, JAHANPANAH. NOT EVEN BIRBAL!

AKBAR LOOKED AT BIRBAL.



THERE ARE THIRTY-THREE THOUSAND, NINE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-ONE, TO BE EXACT.

HIS PROMPT, CONFIDENT ANSWER AMAZED EVEN THE EMPEROR.

BIRBAL! HOW CAN YOU BE SO SURE ? YOU WILL BE SEVERELY PUNISHED IF YOU ARE WRONG.



I AM CONFIDENT THAT I AM RIGHT, JAHANPANAH.



BIRBAL AND THE SHAH OF PERSIA

BIRBAL'S FAME AS THE WISEST, THE WITTIEST OF COURTIER'S, HAD REACHED EVEN THE EARS OF THE SHAH OF DISTANT PERSIA.

I MUST INVITE HIM TO MY COURT AND SEE IF HE REALLY IS AS CLEVER AS HIS REPUTATION CLAIMS.

A FEW MONTHS LATER, BIRBAL CAME TO THE PERSIAN CAPITAL.

COME, HUZUR. YOU MAY PAY YOUR RESPECTS TO OUR SHAH. HE IS IMPATIENT TO SEE YOU. LET ME LEAD YOU TO HIS PRESENCE.

AS BIRBAL ENTERED THE SHAH'S DARBAR, A STRANGE SIGHT MET HIS EYES.

WHAT SHOULD HE DO?
HE HAD NEVER SEEN THE
SHAH BEFORE. AND ALL
THESE MEN WERE
DRESSED ALIKE AND SAT
ON IDENTICAL THRONES!

WHICH ONE
OF THEM IS
THE SHAH?



FOR A MOMENT, BIRBAL STOOD STILL
AND LET HIS GAZE TRAVEL DOWN
THE ROW OF THRONES.



WITHOUT A
DOUBT, YOU ARE
THE SHAH!

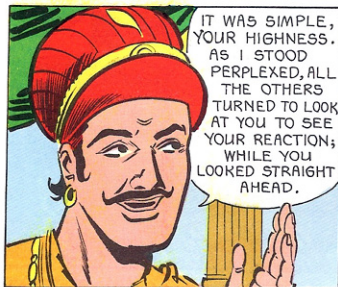




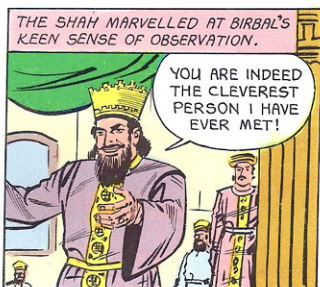
OUR EMPEROR SENDS
YOUR HIGHNESS
HIS REGARDS. HE
HAS SENT ME WITH
GIFTS WHICH ARE
ON THEIR WAY TO
THE TREASURY.

THE SHAH WAS AMAZED.

BIRBAL ! HOW
DID YOU
RECOGNIZE ME !
YOU'VE NEVER
SEEN ME
BEFORE !



IT WAS SIMPLE,
YOUR HIGHNESS.
AS I STOOD
PERPLEXED, ALL
THE OTHERS
TURNED TO LOOK
AT YOU TO SEE
YOUR REACTION;
WHILE YOU
LOOKED STRAIGHT
AHEAD.



THE SHAH MARVELLED AT BIRBAL'S
KEEN SENSE OF OBSERVATION.

YOU ARE INDEED
THE CLEVEREST
PERSON I HAVE
EVER MET !



YOU SHALL HENCEFORTH
BE CALLED THE OCEAN
OF INTELLIGENCE.

AND BEFORE BIRBAL
LEFT FOR HINDUSTAN,
THE SHAH GAVE
HIM ALL THE RICHES
HE COULD CARRY
WITH HIM.

THE SEAL

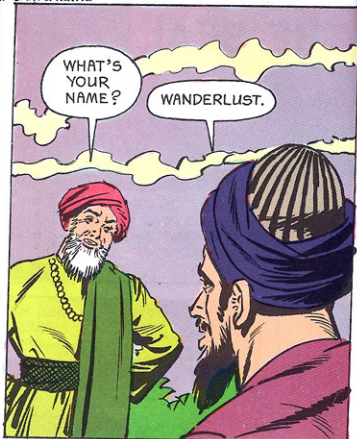
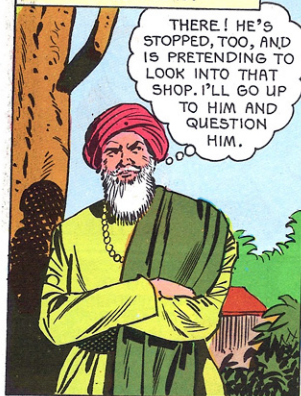
AKBAR HAD THE HABIT OF DISGUIISING HIMSELF AND WANDERING ABOUT IN THE CITY — A HABIT BIRBAL DIDN'T APPROVE OF, AS HE THOUGHT IT UNSAFE.



LATER, AS AKBAR WALKED DOWN THE STREET —



HE STOPPED IN HIS TRACKS
AND TURNED ROUND.



SO IRRITATED WAS AKBAR BY THESE ANSWERS THAT HE FORGOT HIMSELF.

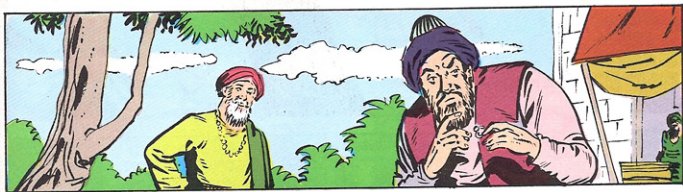
DO YOU KNOW WHO I AM?

A HUMAN BEING LIKE ANY OTHER!



I AM THE EMPEROR. HERE IS MY SEAL, IF YOU DON'T BELIEVE ME.

LET ME SEE IT.



THE STRANGER SLIPPED THE RING INTO HIS CUMMERBAND.



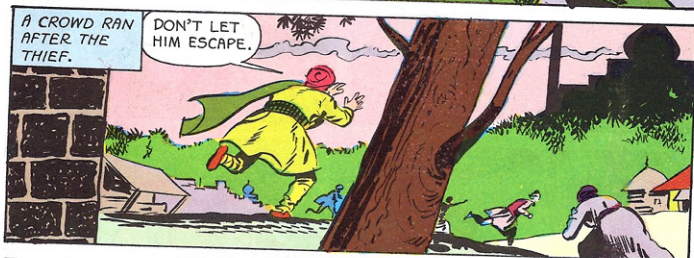
ONLY WHEN THE STRANGER BEGAN TO RUN AWAY DID AKBAR REALISE WHAT HE HAD DONE.

THIEF! THIEF!
CATCH HIM!
CATCH HIM!



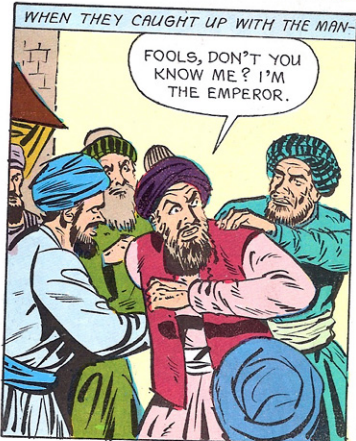
A CROWD RAN AFTER THE THIEF.

DON'T LET HIM ESCAPE.



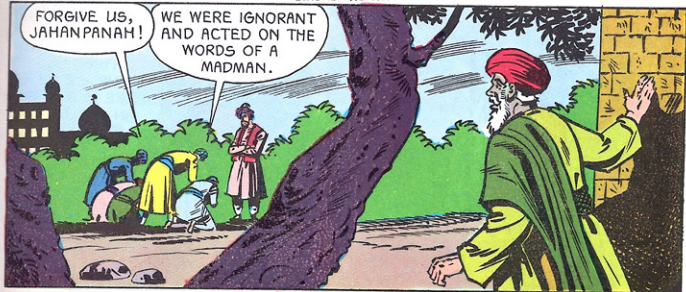
WHEN THEY CAUGHT UP WITH THE MAN-

FOOLS, DON'T YOU KNOW ME? I'M THE EMPEROR.



THIS SHOULD CONVINCE YOU, IF MY WORDS DON'T!





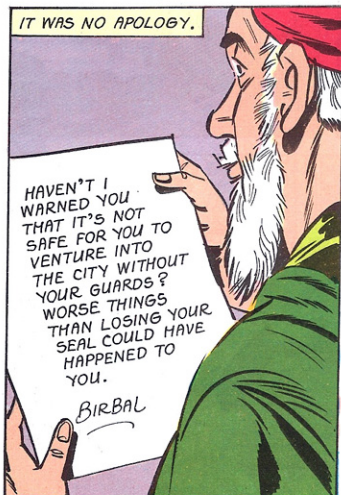
FILLED WITH SUCH THOUGHTS,
AKBAR WALKED INTO HIS CHAMBER.



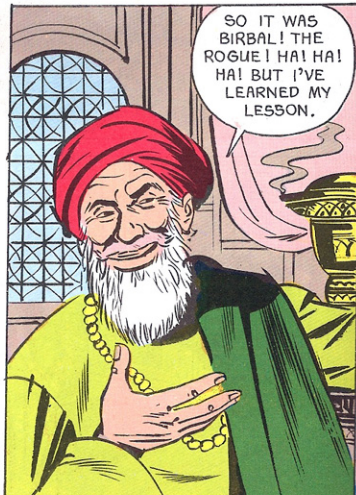
HE OPENED THE PARCEL.



IT WAS NO APOLOGY.



SO IT WAS
BIRBAL! THE
ROGUE! HA! HA!
HA! BUT I'VE
LEARNED MY
LESSON.



AKBAR THE GREAT



ONE DAY, IN OPEN COURT, AKBAR WAS TOLD BY A SYCOPHANT THAT HE WAS GREATER EVEN THAN THE LORD OF THE UNIVERSE.

AKBAR THOUGHT ABOUT IT FOR DAYS.

IN WHAT WAY COULD I BE GREATER THAN GOD?

UNABLE TO ANSWER THE QUESTION FOR HIMSELF, HE SET IT TO HIS COURTIER.

DO YOU THINK I AM GREATER THAN GOD? IF SO, IN WHAT WAY?

WHAT SHALL I SAY?

WHY DIDN'T HE ASK THE MAN WHO SAID IT?

HOW CAN I ANSWER THAT QUESTION WITHOUT EITHER DISPLEASEING THE EMPEROR OR TELLING AN UNTRUTH?

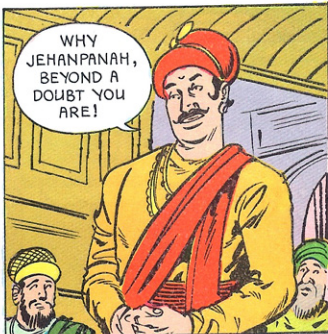
WHEN, LOOKING FROM ONE FACE TO ANOTHER, AKBAR DID NOT RECEIVE AN ANSWER...



...HE TURNED TO BIRBAL.



BIRBAL,
DO YOU
THINK I AM
GREATER
THAN GOD?
AND I WANT
THE TRUTH.



WHY
JEHANPANAH,
BEYOND A
DOUBT YOU
ARE!



BIRBAL, ARE YOU
TRYING TO
FLATTER ME?



NOT AT ALL, JAHANPANAH.
THERE IS CERTAINLY
ONE THING YOU CAN
DO THAT GOD
CAN'T.



AKBAR SMILED.

